

	<b>Environment Committee</b> <b>12 May 2016</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Parks &amp; Open Spaces Strategy</b>
<b>Report of</b>	Commissioning Director - Environment
<b>Wards</b>	All
<b>Status</b>	Public
<b>Urgent</b>	No
<b>Key</b>	Yes
<b>Enclosures</b>	Appendix 1 – Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and Action Plan Appendix 2 – Consultation Data Appendix 3 – Parks and Open Space Detailed Action Plan
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## Summary

The Council recognises that good quality parks and open spaces will play a major role in its continued drive to improve and secure a sustainable future for the built and natural environments of the Borough and that investment in its green infrastructure is as important as investment in its built infrastructure

The Parks and Open Space Strategy has been developed to provide a future visions for green spaces, provide a policy framework in which this key infrastructure can be developed and ensure the delivery of the Environment Committee's Commissioning Plan outcomes and targets for 2016/17 to 2019/20.

The Strategy has been developed to reflect the changing nature of the Borough as it is predicted that the Borough is to change in a most dramatic fashion in the forthcoming decades with increased population, housing and commercial infrastructure. A public consultation on the draft strategy took place between 18 January 2016 and 13 March 2016. The results of the consultation have been reflected in updates to the final Parks and Open Spaces strategy and the development of its accompanying Action Plan.

## **Recommendations**

- 1. That the Environment Committee approves the adoption of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2016 – 2030 and its action plan**
- 2. That the Environment Committee approves the Parks and Open Spaces policies which are set out in 1.19**
- 3. That the Environment Committee instructs officers to maximise the value of external funding to support the aims of the strategy**
- 4. That the Environment Committee instructs officers to submit a capital bid as part of the Councils Capital Programme to support the aims of the strategy**

### **1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED**

- 1.1 The Council is taking steps to address the demands of a developing Borough and the impacts on its built and natural environments through developing a number of strategies, frameworks and policies. These include strategies for recycling and waste, parks and open spaces, enforcement against environmental crime as well as a new cleansing framework. These will ensure that we are well placed to respond to these challenges now, and are prepared to be able to manage the issues in the future.
- 1.1 The Council has developed this strategy for parks and open spaces which reflects the needs and aspirations of residents, businesses and visitors to the Borough and ensures a sustainable financial basis for the service. This strategy will also complement and support other strategies that the Council has produced including The Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Family Friendly Barnet and the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy.

#### **Parks and Open Spaces Strategy**

- 1.2 The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy can be seen in Appendix 1. Since the Environment Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2016, a public consultation on the draft strategy took place between 18 January 2016 and 13 March 2016. The results of the consultation have been reflected in updates to the final Parks and Open Spaces strategy and the development of its accompanying Action Plan. In addition policies have been developed to accompany the strategy, and help to fill its aims and ambitions
- 1.3 Producing this strategy gave an opportunity to re-think the role that parks and open spaces play within the borough and recognize they have the potential to support a wide range of other cross-cutting strategic priorities, including the environment, biodiversity, education, employment, community safety, regeneration and community engagement.
- 1.4 The strategy will enable the Council to:
  - prioritise, plan and commit resources to improve green spaces across the borough,
  - make the case to funders for increased external resources,

- make informed decisions about the future management of the service, and
  - Ensure future development is informed by open space needs and requirements and aligns with other corporate priorities.
- 1.5 In the past there has been insufficient evidence or sources of investment to target those assets with the greatest potential to increase resident satisfaction, generate income or deliver social or economic benefits. The adoption of the strategy provides the platform for the maximisation of potential investment from regeneration schemes and other external bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).
- 1.6 To inform the development of the draft strategy a complete assessment of the parks and open spaces was undertaken; creating an accurate picture of the quality and condition of the sites. This data is publicly available on the [Open Barnet data portal](#).
- 1.7 The draft strategy has identified untapped opportunities to derive greater public benefit from parks and open spaces; increasing their level of use for health or recreational purposes, supporting more private events and building closer partnerships with National Governing Bodies of Sport such as the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) and Football Association (FA).
- 1.8 The strategy has examined Alternate Delivery Model (ADM) options that could be adopted in whole or in part that will enable the Council to progress the aims and objectives for the service in the most effective manner and deliver its vision. Models that have been identified are:
- Retaining and improving the status quo
  - Shared public services
  - Third party contract management
  - Social enterprises and partnerships
  - Trusts and foundations
  - Area based precepts and levies

The action plan will continue work in this area for future consideration by the Committee

### **Consultation**

- 1.9 On 11 January 2016 Environment Committee approved the draft parks and open spaces strategy for consultation. The consultation took place between 18 January 2016 and 13 March 2016. The summary of the results of the consultation can be seen below. The consultation data can be seen in Appendix 3. Full results of the consultation an engagement process are held on the open Barnet Data portal.
- 1.10 Responses to the draft strategy, through the formal consultation process, used the following methodology:
- An on-line questionnaire (140 responses)

- Individual meetings with local residents associations and other stakeholder groups
  - A workshop with 'Friends of Parks' groups from across Barnet
  - Workshops and focus groups for organisations with protected characteristics
  - A workshop with the Barnet Youth Board
- 1.11 The majority of on-line questionnaire responses were received from those who use the parks between once a week and daily. Over 88% of respondent identified themselves as Barnet Residents, while a further 7% identified themselves as representing a voluntary/community organisation. When ask to choose which parks respondents visited the most, the highest used parks were,
- Friary Park – (24%)
  - Oakhill Park – (20%)
  - Victoria Park – (15%)
- 1.12 In response to the aims of strategy the consultation process confirmed that Barnet's residents recognise the importance of the borough's parks and the need to preserve and enhance them. Responses confirmed an understanding that the projected growth in the borough's population would influence the level of demand for open space in different parts of the borough.
- 1.13 Proposals for investment in parks were strongly supported in consultation responses and there was a recognition that there was a real opportunity to bring significant amounts of external funding into the borough. Strong support was expressed for better signage with the parks, enhanced horticulture and more toilet facilities
- 1.14 Options for the future management and funding of parks were considered to require further consultation and detailed development. There was a recognition of the need to address how to achieve an aspiration for a high quality service in the context of the need to identify budget savings.
- 1.15 Several organisations sent through formal responses to the Consultation. Some of the key issues raised were:
- Highlighting the need of design to take account of the sight impaired
  - Concerns around quality/ value assessment. future funding and governance and lack of definition around future investment and action plans
  - The importance of ecological and bio-diversity
- 1.16 The key areas of responses from the Barnet Youth Board were the need for better facilities in parks (especially outdoor gyms and playgrounds), better safety in parks (especially dog control) and more and better events.
- 1.17 The key areas of responses from groups with protected characteristics were the need for inclusive design that recognises the particular requirements of people with special need. Workshop attendees suggested the creation of special dog-

free quiet zones and parks / play equipment specifically designed for the needs of people with disabilities.

### **Green space Policies**

- 1.18 The development of the strategy has provided an opportunity for the Council to set a clear vision and way forward for the parks and open spaces and to guide that vision the Council will formulate a number of policies. Through committing to these policies and implementing this strategy, we will ensure that these key assets are enhanced and continue to tell a positive story about Barnet as a place to live, now and in the future. These policies have been built up around:
- Bringing provision up to Core Strategy target level,
  - Funding and governance of newly created spaces within development areas,
  - Developing a design-led service that enhances town centres and neighbourhoods, preserves heritage and builds green networks,
  - Public safety and security,
  - Enhancing play provision,
  - Improving facilities and the ‘park offer’,
  - Using parks to support health and education outcomes,
  - Building climate change resilience through parks and open spaces,
  - Building stronger relationships between the Council and users; and
  - Considering new ways of funding and managing parks.
- 1.19 11 policy areas have been created and are also reflected in the action plan and will support the delivery of the strategy.

<b>1</b>	<p><b><u>Provision:</u></b></p> <p>The open spaces strategy identifies that there is a deficit of open space provision in certain areas of the borough</p>	<p>The Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek to create 13 new local parks, 1 district parks by 2041</li> <li>• The All London Green Grid Supplementary Planning Guidance (2012) identifies an opportunity to create a new regional park in Barnet.</li> <li>• Develop a framework for the creation of a new “Brent Valley” Regional Park. The new Regional Park will improve the quality, connectivity, management, funding and identity of open space within the GGA (Green Grid Area).</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<p><b><u>Place</u></b></p> <p>The development of a design-led service delivery model for Barnet’s parks service to deliver the goals of the strategy.</p>	<p>The Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop distinctive places that reinforce the identity of individual parts of the borough</li> <li>• Record the borough’s natural and cultural heritage through the preservation and restoration of the borough’s heritage assets</li> <li>• Enhance destination parks and town centre spaces that can contribute to their</li> </ul>

		<p>attractiveness and economic success as distinctive places</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish connected green networks to build a parks system to aligned with the All London Green Grid Supplementary Planning Guidance</li> <li>• Design an inclusive public realm conforming to principles established in Accessible London Supplementary Planning Guidance</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<p><b><u>Community safety:</u></b></p> <p>Parks and open spaces should be safe places that are welcoming to Barnet’s residents. Such places can help deliver a greater range of positive environmental, economic and social outcomes for Barnet’s communities</p>	<p>The Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain safe spaces where people want to visit, stay and play using design interventions to reduce opportunities for anti-social behavior</li> <li>• Respond to the needs of its communities in managing its parks and open spaces</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<p><b><u>Play:</u></b></p> <p>Good quality play facilities offer and support quality of life and enhance educational attainment for children</p>	<p>The Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the number and quality of play spaces with a variety of play offers including natural play and more diverse spaces for young people including MUGA’ skate parks etc.</li> <li>• Review the provision for adults and children with learning difficulties and disabilities</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<p><b><u>Sports</u></b></p> <p>Barnet’s residents have identified parks and open spaces as offering good places to adopt an active lifestyle</p>	<p>The Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create new sports hubs across the borough as centres of excellence for sports</li> <li>• Support and expand the network of outdoor gyms and trim trails</li> <li>• Implement the recommendations of the Barnet Playing Pitch Strategy in respect of future sports provision</li> </ul>
<b>6</b>	<p><b><u>Facilities</u></b></p> <p>Response to the Open Space Strategy</p>	<p>The Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide good quality accessible toilets at main traditional parks and sports grounds, meeting the British Toilet Association standard</li> </ul>

	engagement process has highlighted resident's desire for an enhancement of facilities across parks and open spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the quality of facilities to promote greater commercial use through concessions, cafés, events etc.</li> </ul>
7	<p><b><u>Maintenance:</u></b></p> <p>Response to the Open Space Strategy engagement process has identified an aspiration for an enhancement of standards of maintenance across the borough's parks and open spaces</p>	<p>The Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve grounds maintenance focusing on the basics of grass cutting, litter, fly tipping and dog fouling</li> <li>• Enhance efficiency of maintenance operation through adoption of asset-based performance assessment</li> <li>• Tackle anti-social behavior, focusing on prevention and greater responsiveness to incidents, access and visibility.</li> <li>• Create a robust set of KPIs and annual programme of reporting for maintenance operations</li> </ul>
8	<p><b><u>Green Infrastructure:</u></b></p> <p>Successful green infrastructure management will be a key element in the borough's infrastructure delivery plan, in managing the public realm and preparing the borough for the impacts of climate change</p>	<p>The Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build in sustainability measures to adapt to and mitigate, the effects of climate change including flood attenuation, trees for cooling and drought resistant planting</li> <li>• Plant and actively manage trees to improve distribution across Barnet</li> <li>• Safeguard and enhance habitats and species within Barnet's parks and open spaces by conforming to the guidelines set out in the Biodiversity Action Plan for London</li> <li>• Improving the quality of green corridors, riverside routes and cycle/walkways for recreation and biodiversity as well as pedestrian and cycle trips</li> </ul>
9	<p><b><u>Health:</u></b></p> <p>Through increasing accessibility and levels of physical activity parks and open spaces can play a key part in keeping people healthy</p>	<p>The Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop partnerships to reinforce the potential of parks and open spaces to deliver successful health outcomes particularly in respect of coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity and mental health.</li> </ul>

10	<p><b><u>Education:</u></b></p> <p>Understanding nature helps to enhance educational attainment</p>	<p>The Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop stronger partnerships with Barnet's schools to support the potential of parks to deliver positive outcomes for education</li> <li>• Work with partners to develop forest school learning programmes in Barnet</li> <li>• Invest in biodiversity skills, staff training and investigate apprenticeship</li> </ul>
11	<p><b><u>Engagement:</u></b></p> <p>Local communities play an important role in determining the future of parks and open spaces in Barnet</p>	<p>The Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a stronger community base of friends and user groups</li> <li>• Actively encourage volunteering in Barnet</li> </ul>

## 2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **Recommendation 1** - It is recommended that Environment Committee approves the adoption of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and its action plan. This will enable the Parks Service to have a clear focus on what it needs to accomplish, and ensure other services can support the aims of the strategy.
- 2.2 **Recommendation 2** - It is recommended that Environment Committee approves the adoption of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy Policies. This will support the delivery of the action plan and support the aims of the strategy.
- 2.3 **Recommendation 3** - It is recommended that Environment Committee supports bids for external funding for parks and open spaces to be made by the Council where they support the aims of the strategy. This may allow additional funding streams to be found to support the parks service
- 2.4 **Recommendation 4** - It is recommended that Environment Committee supports bids for internal funding for parks and open spaces to be made in support of the aims of the strategy

## 3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 That the Council could have developed a shorter term strategy. This was considered but not recommended as it is felt that a longer term approach needs to be taken with the service, particularly as Barnet has significant household growth projections.

## 4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 If the Committee is so minded to adopt the Parks and Open Spaces strategy the document will be published on the Barnet website, and the action plan items will be developed for implementation.



## 5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

### 5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

5.1.1 The Corporate Plan 2015-2020 is based on the core principles of fairness, responsibility and opportunity to make sure Barnet is a place:

- Of opportunity, where people can further their quality of life
- Where people are helped to help themselves, recognising that prevention is better than cure
- Where responsibility is shared, fairly
- Where services are delivered efficiently to get value for money for the taxpayer

5.1.2 The Corporate Plan includes the following outcomes and targets that can be delivered, partially or fully by the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy

- To increase the percentage of people satisfied with Barnet's parks, playgrounds and open spaces, both across the borough as a whole and within parks currently scoring the lowest levels of satisfaction
- Driving an increase in overall resident satisfaction with Barnet as a place to live to amongst the highest of any Outer London borough
- Facilitating economic growth and the success of residents, and removing any barriers or unnecessary costs to growth for successful local businesses

5.1.3 With the help of residents protecting, conserving and enhancing green space and the leafy character of Barnet for current and future generations

5.1.4 Supporting and improving the health and wellbeing of the population by linking with

- Linking with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy,
- By providing safe green spaces to play by making them more family friendly and linking with the Safer Communities Strategy,
- Participate in sports and physical activity, walking and cycling
- Linking with the forthcoming Sport and Physical Activity Strategy and Playing Pitch Strategy.

5.1.5 Establish Barnet as a place that supports growth in a way that allows both existing and future residents to succeed, and which drives satisfaction with the Borough as a place to live to amongst the highest in the country

### 5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

5.2.1 **Finance & Value for Money** - To reduce the council's net expenditure on Green Spaces by looking at how Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

savings can be achieved and how additional income or investment can be brought into the service.

5.2.2 The activity based costing done in 2015/16 set out the expenditure of parks and open space to be:

	Annual Cost £ ,000
Ground Maintenance (Parks)	1,105
Ground Maintenance (Highways)	606
Parks Management	276
Other	1,346
Total	<b>3,333</b>

5.2.3 Savings in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which will come from the parks and open spaces service total £945,000

5.2.4 The adoption of the strategy provides the platform for the maximisation of potential investment from regeneration schemes and other external bodies such as the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) etc

**Capital Projects** – Within Parks there are a number of significant capital projects currently on-going, as well as a programme of “small business as usual” improvement projects. The significant capital projects include

- Silk Stream and Montrose
- Youth Zone
- Victoria Rec Sports Centre
- Copthall Sports Centre

5.2.5 Risks do exist around the long term financing of parks. As capital investment is made in the park assets, there will be a need to ensure that it is maintained. This will have an impact on the on-going revenue budget; this may be addressed in part within the planning for the alternative delivery model for Parks. Recommendation no. 4 recommends the committee support a bid for internal capital funding. All such bids will need be seen in the overall financial context of the council.

5.2.6 **Procurement, Staffing, and Property** – at this stage in the development of the strategy there are no implications.

5.2.7 **IT** – None at this time.

5.2.8 **Sustainability** –The strategy looks to protect our wider environment. One of the key themes of the strategy is that parks and open spaces support environmental outcome such as:

- River corridors and flood risk management
- Sustainable travel – facilitating the growth of walking and cycling
- Quality of the environment and its management

### 5.3 Social Value

- 5.3.1 Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. The three key themes within the Strategy are:
- Social Outcomes and Benefits
  - Environmental Outcomes and Benefits
  - Economic Outcomes and Benefit

### 5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.4.1 Local authorities have a number of different statutory powers in relation to parks and open spaces, including the Public Health Act 1875, which permits the purchase and maintenance of public walks or pleasure grounds and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, which gives wide powers to provide recreational facilities. The Open Spaces Act 1906 provides that local authorities shall hold and administer open space in trust to allow the enjoyment of it by the public and shall maintain and keep the open space in a good and decent state.
- 5.4.2 The Council's Constitution (Clause 15A, Responsibility for Functions, Annex A) sets out the terms of reference of the Environment Committee. This includes
- Commissioning parks and open spaces refuse and recycling, waste minimisation and street cleaning,
  - Approve any non-statutory plan or strategy within the remit of the Committee that is not reserved to Full Council or Policy and Resources Committee.
  - Approve fees and charges for those areas under the remit of the Committee
- 5.4.3 This matter is not reserved to Full Council or to the Policy and Resources Committee as the Constitution specifically allocates matters of this type to the Environment Committee.

### 5.5 Risk Management

- 5.5.1 The management of risk is done on a continual basis and reported as part of the Council Quarterly Performance regime and considered as part of the Performance and Contract Management Committee quarterly monitoring report.
- 5.5.2 Risks are managed through the project boards and review and revised at its meeting. The current key risk areas are regarding :

	Rating Criteria	1: Low	2: Med	3: High
1	Total investment required		X	
2	Potential benefits		X	
3	Return on investment		X	
4	Level of risk	X		
5	Political sensitivity		X	
6	Fit with corporate objectives		X	

7	Users / DU's impacted	X		
	Total Score	12		

## 5.6 Equalities and Diversity

5.6.1 The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
- foster good relations between people from different groups

5.6.2 Relevant protected characteristics are – age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

5.6.3 The purpose of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy is to ensure that the broad diversity of our residents and communities in Barnet continue to enjoy the benefits of these community assets and their needs and aspirations are reflected in the provision that Barnet makes.

5.6.4 During the engagement consultation a focus was given to protected characteristics groups such as those with disabilities. Focus was also given to views of young people, and how they can continue to be engaged with the development of parks. Feedback from these groups was incorporated into the final strategy and the action plan. More details can be found in section 1 under the heading “Consultation”

## 5.7 Consultation and Engagement

5.7.1 On 11 January 2016 Environment Committee approved the draft parks and open spaces strategy for consultation. The consultation took place between 18 January 2016 and 13 March 2016. The summary of the results of the consultation can be seen in section 1 under the heading “Consultation”, and full details are on the open Barnet data portal.

## 6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 [Environment Committee 11 January 2016 Papers](#)

6.2 [Open Barnet Data Portal](#)