



To: **Executive Councillor for Arts & Recreation**

Report by: Green Space Manager
Head of Active Communities

Relevant scrutiny committee: COMMUNITY SERVICES 12/03/09

Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2009-2013 first draft Key Decision

1. Executive Summary

This report summarises work completed to date on the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2009-2013. The Executive Councillor for Arts and Recreation approved the scope for the strategy in April 2008. Work on the strategy is ongoing and the Executive Councillor is recommended to approve this version prior to consultation with stakeholders. An action plan will be further developed as part of this process. A second draft will be prepared in May 2009 for further consultation prior to final scrutiny and approval in July 2009.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended to approve this first draft of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy for consultation with stakeholders as identified in the report.

3. Background

3.1 There are 88 parks and open spaces owned and managed by the council in Cambridge. These cover more than 315 hectares and range from the larger parks in the central area to small pocket parks in the suburbs. These areas are highly valued by residents for recreational, amenity and other purposes.

Parks and open spaces have never been more important than today, in the face of new environmental, social and economic challenges. Climate change and the growth of the City require us to understand the vital role our parks and open spaces provide, such as flood protection and urban cooling, and environmental protection of wildlife.

3.2 The creation, protection and improvement of high quality open spaces are detailed in our vision for Parks and Open Spaces in Cambridge.

‘Cambridge Parks and Open Spaces will protect and provide attractive and diverse environments that enhance the quality of life for new and existing communities, workers and visitors and will provide opportunities for people to participate in activities in pursuit of a more healthy lifestyle, to socialise or relax and enjoy green spaces in safety.’

3.3 Parks and open spaces play an important role in helping Cambridge City Council achieve its Medium Term Objectives:

- Promote Cambridge as a sustainable city, in particular by reducing carbon dioxide emissions and the amount of waste going into landfill in the City and sub-region;
- Ensure that residents and other service users have an entirely positive experience of dealing with the Council;
- Maintain a healthy, safe and enjoyable city for all, with thriving and viable neighbourhoods;
- Lead the growth of Cambridge to achieve attractive, sustainable new neighbourhoods, including affordable housing, close to a good range of facilities, and supported by transport networks so that people can opt not to use the car.

3.4 The strategy analyses information across a number of areas:

- National, regional and local context
- Understanding supply
- Understanding demands and needs
- Delivery and Resources
- Partnerships and thematic working

3.5 Using the objectives of the Council’s Cultural Framework, it is possible to identify issues emerging from this research to highlight focus for 22 actions:

Existing and future investment is targeted on addressing local need.

- a) Address localised concerns about standards of provision and maintenance;
- b) Provide a shared and systematic approach to the monitoring, evaluation and management of grounds maintenance that involves and responds to the needs of local people;
- c) Establish a broad range of opportunities for encouraging feedback on parks and open spaces by all users;
- d) Develop an assessment process and toolkit to identify requirements for play that offers systematic engagement with children and young people;
- e) Revise conservation and management plans of key parks and open spaces;
- f) Consider opportunities for external investment where the need for improvement has been identified.

Inequalities of provision and access are addressed.

- g) Consider ways to improve the quality, quantity and range of parks and open spaces in Cambridge;
- h) Consider improvements in the quality of maintenance of neighbourhood parks and open spaces to encourage people to use more local facilities rather than travel to 'destination' parks;
- i) Use a systematic approach to identifying areas for investment.
- j) Explore further the views of BME residents who wish to use parks and open spaces; also that a range of methods of engagement and communication should be offered.

Sub regional and cross boundary issues are considered and addressed.

- k) Contribute towards an updated open space and recreation strategy for the Council to include standards for informal and formal open space;
- l) Develop a benchmarking programme to ascertain the extent to which cost effectiveness and best value are achieved.

Partnership working is fostered to achieve shared outcomes.

- m) Raise the profile, understanding and value of parks and open spaces in Cambridge;
- n) Engage systematically with local people to identify aspirations and opportunities for involvement;
- o) Encourage 'ownership' by the local community through Friends groups and opportunities for volunteering;
- p) Consider proactive ways to 'design out' crime with techniques such as natural surveillance and encourage positive approaches such as increasing activities that bring natural policing by visitors;
- q) Consider and consult on the introduction and updating of bye laws where this is appropriate;
- r) Develop conservation, habitat and management plans for parks and open spaces;
- s) Review methods of working to ensure that they have as little environmental impact as possible;
- t) Develop more Integrated internal working relationships to address environmental work ;
- u) Utilise the emerging events framework to balance the increased use of parks and open spaces for events against realistic capacity and impact.
- v) Use 'Be Active, Be Healthy' to guide partnership approaches to increase opportunity for improvement to health and well being by the use of parks and open spaces

3.6 Consultation on the first draft will involve internal and external stakeholders as suggested in section 9 of the report. Workshops will be held to discuss the draft strategy and will use a 'check, challenge, contribute and change' format.

4. Implications

a) Equal Opportunities

An equality impact assessment will be carried out during the second draft stage.

b) Financial

The final action plan will identify approved or required use of City Council resources and this will be reflected in the Medium Term Strategy. The plans will also identify potential investment and funding through other sources such as the planning process, Government, partnerships, commercial activities and support in kind.

c) Staffing

There are no implications for staffing in the report.

d) Environmental

The second draft of the strategy will consider a greater focus on sustainability and the Council's Climate Change Strategy 2008-2012.

5. Background papers

- a) Audit of Cambridge Parks and Open Spaces

6. Appendices

- a) Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2009-2013; first draft

7. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

Author's Name: Alistair Wilson
Author's Phone Number: 01223 457546
Author's Email: Alistair.wilson@cambridge.gov.uk