

Test Valley Borough Green Space Strategy

Report of the Community and Leisure Portfolio Holder

Recommended:

1. That the Draft Green Space Strategy be approved subject to public and partner consultation.
2. That the Head of Community and Leisure be authorised, in consultation with the Community and Leisure Portfolio Holder, to make any minor changes to the document following consultation.

SUMMARY:

- The Green Space Strategy 2020 – 2030 sets out the way the Council will manage and improve its green spaces over the next 10 years, and how we will work with the community to manage, improve and create a resilient green space network.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Green Space Strategy 2020 – 2030 builds on the Council's first strategy document published in 2007. The strategy provides a planned approach to the management and improvement of Council green spaces working alongside the community and our partners.

2 Background

- 2.1 High quality, well-managed green spaces are a vital part of healthy sustainable communities. They are an essential aspect of everyday life that communities feel passionately about. The Council is committed to providing quality green spaces, across a spectrum of open space type, to provide places for fun, recreation, health and high quality space for the Borough's wildlife.
- 2.2 The Green Space Strategy 2020 – 2030 seeks to identify the current issues facing green spaces, how they are used and managed and how we will work collectively with our local community, and our partners to address current and future pressures.
- 2.3 This planned approach to green space management enables sustainable long term investment to maximise the way spaces are used and managed. It enables the Council to work with local communities to plan facilities to meet the need of local people, and helps to ensure ecology and the conservation of the natural environment is at the forefront of our thinking.

2.4 **Key issues** – A number of key issues have been identified and has informed the way in which the strategy has been developed. These are summarised as follows:

- How do we continue to provide accessible and well managed spaces to support the health and wellbeing of our communities?
- How do we ensure biodiversity and access to nature is considered across our green spaces and not confined to nature reserves?
- How we respond to the climate emergency and ensure spaces provide cool and comfortable environment while maximising carbon sequestration opportunities?
- How do we manage trees in the landscape to ensure a sustainable tree stock in the face of a warming climate and increasing challenges from pests and diseases?
- How we meet the increasing demand for access to green space and ensure our spaces meet the needs of the community?
- How do we ensure that all green space on new housing development are appropriately located and laid out to a high standard?
- How we ensure we maintaining safe spaces where our community feel safe?

2.5 To respond these key issues the proposed strategic aims of the strategy are:

- To respond to the increasing pressure for more (and more diverse) green space to meet current and future demand
- To provide resilient spaces in the face of a changing climate
- To connect green spaces to form part of an ecological network
- To maintain safe and accessible green spaces
- Encourage community participation in green space management

2.6 These strategic aims reflect the current issues and will provide the means to work with communities to continue to make sustainable improvements. A new action plan has been prepared (see Appendix 1) to address how we will continue to deal with the issues facing our green spaces. This action plan will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure our approach is effective and work is making a positive impact. This approach will enable the Council, community and our partners to be responsive to new opportunities, ideas and any funding opportunities, as they emerge.

2.7 The strategy will focus on areas of land owned or managed by the Council which measure over 0.2 hectares or 2000m² (for comparison purposes this would comparable to the size of 3 tennis courts). By placing this emphasis on larger spaces will help to target resources to sites which will have a maximum impact and benefit a greater number of residents.

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 3.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2019 - 2023, sets out four strategic aims for maintaining and improving quality of life in Test Valley. The Green Space Strategy will deliver aspirations for Growing the potential of Communities where residents feel empowered connected to build upon their strengths, and Growing the Potential of the local environment for current and future generations.
- 3.2 Through the review of our Local Plan and our strategies for green spaces, we will continue to identify opportunities to increase access to the countryside and green spaces for Test Valley residents.

4 Consultations/Communications

- 4.1 The strategy has been developed with a cross service working group.
- 4.2 It is proposed that the draft strategy is shared for public and partner comment for a 4 week period. The outcome of this consultation will be published on the Councils website along with a response to all comments.
- 4.3 Comments and suggestions which improve the strategy will be incorporated or an explanation given as to why they have been considered but not included.
- 4.4 Comments and suggestions which warrant reconsideration, or fundamental strategy or policy review, will be agreed with the Community and Leisure Portfolio Holder and reported back to Cabinet for further consideration as appropriate.

5 Options

- 5.1 The option is whether the strategy is adopted and considered acceptable to be shared publicly for comment or whether further work is deemed required.

6 Option Appraisal

- 6.1 **Option 1 - The strategy is adopted subject to a period of public and partner consultation.** Following a strategic and planned approach to the management of green space is a more efficient and accountable way to improve these important community assets. Adopting the strategy is considered low risk but high value where we can work with our communities to achieve a resilient and multi functional green space network.
- 6.2 **Option 2 – Do not adopt the strategy and follow an adhoc approach to the management of the Councils green spaces.** Adopting a more reactive approach to the management of our green spaces will be less resource efficient and will not necessarily target the most in need spaces.
- 6.3 Option 1 is considered to be the most effective way to manage the Councils green space network and is therefore recommended.

7 Risk Management

- 7.1 An evaluation of the risks indicate that the existing controls in place mean that no significant risks have been identified at this time.

8 Resource Implications

- 8.1 A planned approach to the management of green space is an efficient use of both financial and staff resource which will help to ensure we prioritise areas most in need.
- 8.2 The adoption of the strategy itself presents no immediate or direct resource implications, however, in order to deliver aspirations within this strategy and where appropriate, bids will be made to the Councils capital programme and the Community Infrastructure Levy fund. This will support and complement existing resource allocation through service revenue budgets and the Councils asset management plan. Where funds are held for specific projects in specific borough wards, collected S106 contributions will be used to fund projects. Where new space is adopted by the Council on new housing developments, a commuted sum to cover the maintenance and care of spaces over a twenty year period will be collected.

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 The Council has a duty of care under the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act to do what is reasonably practical to ensure green spaces are safe for use. The Council has an obligation under the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act to consider biodiversity in all decisions.

10 Equality Issues

- 10.1 Green spaces are managed to ensure where reasonably practicable we comply with the Equalities Act 2010.

11 Other Issues

- 11.1 Community Safety Issues - Safe spaces are places where the community feel comfortable using them at all times of the day. The Council will work with partners to target issues if and when they arise.
- 11.2 Environmental Health Issues – The safety of the community who use our green spaces is a top priority. The Council will work to ensure it does what is reasonably practicable to ensure sites are appropriately inspected and properly managed.
- 11.3 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate – The delivery of this strategy takes into account the need for appropriate management of the green space network in order to promote resilience in a changing climate.
- 11.4 Property Issues – The Council manage over 430 hectares of green spaces across the borough.

11.5 Wards/Communities Affected – All wards where the Council own and manage green spaces will be affected by the strategy.

12 Conclusion and reasons for recommendation

12.1 The report seeks the approval that the Draft Green Space Strategy be approved subject to public and partner consultation.

12.2 That the Head of Community and Leisure be authorised, in consultation with the Community and Leisure Portfolio Holder, to make any minor changes to the document following consultation. This will help to ensure the published strategy is a robust and reflects the needs of our community.

<u>Background Papers</u>			
None			
<u>Confidentiality</u>			
It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.			
No of Annexes:	2	File Ref:	N/A
Portfolio- (Community and Leisure) Councillor I Jeffrey			
Officer:	Kevin Harrington	Ext:	8801
Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	9 September 2020