
To: **Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)**

Date: **26th June 2019**

Subject: **Draft Green Space Strategy**

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To provide Members with background to the draft Green Space Strategy.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) are recommended to:
- 1) Consider the draft Green Space Strategy (attached as Appendix 1).
 - 2) Consider the recommendations from the Green Space Strategy Task and Finish Group to be presented at the meeting.

3 Information/Background

- 3.1 At its meeting held during September 2008 the Council approved its second Greenspace Strategy which covered a ten-year period terminating on the 31st March 2018.
- 3.2 There is now increasing tangible evidence which demonstrates how the City's Green Spaces including all of our parks, recreation grounds, playing fields, children's playgrounds, ornamental gardens, golf courses, and woodlands directly contribute to our people's health and wellbeing. In addition to the health benefits they help create thriving communities providing significant opportunities to develop and enhance the social, recreational, environmental, educational and economic wellbeing of our community.
- 3.3 The importance of Councils developing a strategy for greenspaces is well recognised and promoted as good practice by a number of notable bodies including The Design Council (formally CABE Space) and Mayor of London's Open Space Strategies Best Practice Guidance. Social and demographic changes, reductions in government spending and budgets affecting parks and open spaces along with environmental changes such as the impacts of global warming and the strains on wildlife, policy changes and changes in greenspace provision has meant that the city is in a different place than it was 10 years ago. The role and importance of our greenspace is increasing, and we must ensure that it continues to meet the changing needs and demands placed on it and provides value and benefit to the community into the future.
- 3.4 Through its action plan the Greenspace Strategy adopted by the City Council in 2008 delivered a number of significant achievements. These include an increased level of customer satisfaction with the city's greenspaces, an increase in the

number of voluntary groups supporting parks, the achievement of 6 national awards, the establishment of successful partnerships, improvement made to over 60 park sites, an increase in the number of sites designated as important to wildlife, the production of management and maintenance plans and considerable success in obtaining external income amongst many other achievements. The 2019 - 2024 Strategy replaces the previous version and builds on those achievements setting the scene for the management and development of our greenspaces over the next 5 years.

- 3.5 The revised strategy has been developed through a number of stages, including:
- Policy Review
 - An assessment of greenspace quality, quantity and accessibility
 - Stakeholder Consultation
 - Analysis and Evaluation
 - Recommendations and Action Plan
- 3.6 To ensure the revised greenspace strategy is both effective and robust a review of both national and local policy was undertaken and considered as part of the strategy development. Relevant recommendations, guidelines and principles were taken into account and reflected in the strategy. This included the National Planning Policy Framework, Communities and Planning 2012 with particular reference to the quality of greenspace provision and the need to undertake local needs assessments for open space provision. Tackling inactivity, investing in young children, encouraging strong local collaboration and innovation and sharing best practice was drawn from Sport England's Strategy "Towards an Active Nation 2016".
- 3.7 Coventry's 2017 Local Plan includes a number of key objectives relating to open space and relevant to the revised greenspace strategy. These include creating a greener cleaner city, improving the quality and design of spaces to provide attractive and sustainable clean environments, improving health and wellbeing through access to quality health provisions, encouraging healthy lifestyles including activities such as walking and cycling and supporting safer communities ensuring open spaces are designed to reduce opportunities for crime and fear of crime. Coventry's Health & Wellbeing Strategy (2016 – 2019) recognises the city's status as a Marmot City and sets out 3 key priorities. This includes working together to reduce health and wellbeing inequalities, improving the health and wellbeing of individuals with complex needs, and developing integrated health and care systems supporting and enabling people to live their lives well. The city's Green spaces have an important part to play in the delivery of the Health and Wellbeing agenda. Other local strategies considered include Coventry's Sports Strategy (2014 – 2024) and Coventry's Playing Pitch Strategy (2019). Aims included the provision of high quality, accessible sporting opportunities and experiences. Prioritisation of playing pitches, improved maintenance and development of pitch stock.
- 3.8 An assessment of the quantity, quality and accessibility of the City's greenspace was undertaken to inform the strategy and provide the robust evidence needed in making Section 106 claims in relation to housing developments. A greenspace typology was used to classify the greenspace in accordance with their primary

purpose and followed Coventry's Local Plan designations of Formal, Informal and Functional space. Greenspaces were also classified within a hierarchy according to their significance. These classifications are City, District, Neighbourhood and Local sites. A further designation was applied according to each sites level of public accessibility and defined as Unrestricted, Limited and Not Accessible.

- 3.9 Only those areas of open space greater than 0.1 hectares were included in the data analysis. 650 individual green spaces sites were recorded totalling nearly 2000 hectares. Full details of sites analysed are given in the draft strategy in Appendix A. Appendix B shows the proportion of green space by type. Interestingly despite the urban nature of the City, natural and semi-natural green space accounts for nearly all green space.
- 3.10 An assessment of accessibility indicated that two thirds of green space across the city, some 430 sites had no restrictions on public access with almost all the remainder having at least some limited public access. Only 2% of the recorded green space had no public access. The sites with limited access tended to be sports clubs, allotments or school grounds. Appendix C details the unrestricted greenspace provision. This again indicates that both natural and semi-natural greenspace provision remains prominent.
- 3.11 There is considerable variation in the amount of greenspace by ward across the city. Residents of Henley and Wainbody wards can access over 100 hectares of green space, whereas those living in Upper Stoke, Lower Stoke, Radford and Foleshill Wards have access to provision significantly below the ward average of 62.3 hectares. Overall across the city, the average level of provision is 3.05 hectares per 1,000 population. There is however significant variation in the quantity of provision by ward with Henley Ward having the greatest level of provision at 6.02 hectares per 1000 population and Foleshill Ward the lowest at 0.50 hectares per 1000 population.
- 3.12 A quality assessment was undertaken on 223 spaces based on criteria derived from the Green Flag Award, a recognised national standard and giving an indication of relative quality. The assessment found that the average quality score was 43 out of 100. Cemeteries and churchyards achieved the highest scores with natural and semi-natural green space attracting the lowest. Interestingly the highest average scores were given for control of dogs and the lowest for conservation of landscape features. Those sites associated with voluntary groups such as friends groups had higher average scores. Overall there appeared to be little correlation between deprivation and greenspace quality with residents of all wards enjoying good access to high quality greenspaces.
- 3.13 Consultation was undertaken in 2 phases. The first included a Household Survey with questionnaires being sent to 5,000 households randomly selected throughout the City, a total 549 postal returns were received (10.9%) and 698 online surveys received. In addition, efforts were made to seek the views of hard to reach groups through a Positive Image Festival Group Survey to boost responses from Black, Minority and Ethnic (BME) groups and a Childrens and Young People survey. Two stakeholder workshops were held and included representation from Public Health, Planning, Sport England and the Greenspace & Heritage Forum as well as a number of face to face meetings.
- 3.14 A number of key findings emerged from the consultation. The City's parks and open spaces are well used and valued. Most people walked to parks and greenspaces. There was a strong recognition that that they enhance health and

wellbeing and their quality of life. The main reasons for visiting included fresh air, walking and jogging, enjoy nature and taking the kids to the play facilities. There were however a number of barriers to use which were recognised. These included dog fouling, places not feeling safe, perceptions of anti-social behaviour, lack of facilities and access overall. Satisfaction with greenspace was typically high however and considered to be good quality although there was low satisfaction amongst young people with regards to provision for teenagers.

- 3.15 The consultation identified a number of improvement priorities. The highest included more and better seating, more wildlife habitats, better dog control and measures to address dog fouling, improved toilet and catering facilities and better provision for children and young people. In terms of maintenance priorities grass cutting, repairs to paths, children's play area maintenance and looking after wildlife were highlighted.
- 3.16 The second phase of the consultation included two further stakeholder workshops to provide feedback on the findings and assisted in developing the strategy vision, aims, identify key issues and the draft recommendations forming the 5-year action plan. The public were also invited to comment on the draft strategy which also formed part of the phase two consultation.
- 3.17 The Strategy presents a number of key recommendations. These seek to:
- Ensure parks remain safe and vibrant spaces to visit, supporting community use and make an important contribution to the delivery of the City of Culture programme.
 - Address barriers to use and encourage greater usage and value through the better reporting and recording of anti-social behaviour including issues relating to the management and maintenance of greenspaces and dog fouling and control.
 - Increase park use, promoting greenspace as venues for activities, developing event and activity programmes, creating community hubs and community champions and provide facilities that appeal to all sections of the community.
 - Address deficiencies in the quality, quantity and accessibility of greenspace and playing pitch provision through the adoption of local standards, improve community access to education facilities, increase provision for young people.
 - Address deficiencies in greenspace and quality of facilities through the development of local standards and measure changes delivered through the strategy.
 - Establish effective partnerships to safeguard and enhance biodiversity assets, promote and improve access to green corridors and canals and associated features, creation of flower rich habitats which support invertebrates and implement the Councils Tree Strategy.
 - Support and work with Friends and other voluntary community groups. Fostering the development of new groups and assisting with community led events, securing external funding and opportunities for community asset transfers.

- Maintain the existing Green Flag Awards and continue to develop management and maintenance plans for greenspaces improving biodiversity and accessibility to greenspace.
- Establish a robust framework to secure developer contributions in order to maintain and improve greenspace and to explore diverse external funding streams to increase income.

3.18 A five-year action plan has been produced which will enable the identification of priorities and progress on the implementation and delivery of the strategy to be monitored and tracked. The action plan is included with the Strategy at Appendix 1.

Graham Hood
Head of Streetpride and Greenspace
Place Directorate
Tel: 024 76 83 2194,
Email: graham.hood@coventry.gov.uk