

Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee

1st March 2016

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

MAIDSTONE PARKS AND OPEN SPACES 10 YEAR PLAN

Final Decision-Maker	Heritage, Leisure and Culture Committee
Lead Head of Service	Head of Commercial and Economic Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Jason Taylor – Parks and Leisure Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That work continues on the Maidstone Parks and Open Spaces 10 year plan as detailed in this report.
2. That when a draft document is produced, committee members are invited to give their opinions and thoughts on the document.
3. That following consultation the committee will look to adopt the final Maidstone Parks and Open Spaces 10 Year Plan in the later part of 2016.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all
 - Encouraging good health and wellbeing
 - Ensuring there are good leisure and cultural attractions

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee	March 1 st 2016

MAIDSTONE PARKS AND OPEN SPACES 10 YEAR PLAN

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents the project framework and timetable for the production of a new Parks and Open Spaces 10 Year Plan. This work is currently being undertaken by Jason Taylor, Maidstone Borough Council's Parks and Leisure Manager.
- 1.2 This project looks at the value and purpose of parks and open spaces in the Borough and how we currently manage them. It will ultimately provide an outline of how we should manage them in the future to ensure their sustainability.
- 1.3 Having a clear adopted 10 Year Plan will enable us to make best use of the resources available to us, bid to any relevant funding schemes which become available, have a clear set of objectives which we have agreed with our stakeholders, ensure that we put in place the most effective and efficient management arrangements for the future and encourage the use of our parks and open spaces by residents and visitors whilst contributing to the health and wellbeing agenda

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This work will be carried out in three stages.
- 2.2 A review of our parks and open spaces to include: Parks, Play Areas, Allotments, Sports Pitches, Natural/Semi Natural and Events and how we manage and run them. This review will look at our own provision and compare it to how parks and open spaces belonging to others organisations are managed. There will be a review of how the value of green space is measured. This will involve reviewing academic research, online research and looking at case studies, to find good examples of best practice in other organisations that are managing their parks and open spaces with their future sustainability in mind. If appropriate, site visits will be arranged to view best practice elsewhere and to interview those involved in managing these sites.
- 2.3 Identifying any issues we currently have with the ongoing management of our parks and open spaces, compare how others deal with these issues and propose solutions on how MBC can resolve these issues in the future.

- 2.4 Production of a Draft Parks and Open Spaces 10 Year Plan incorporating the work carried out above.
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3. DOCUMENT FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 Below is a draft list of contents to be included in the plan. This will be developed further as research is undertaken and information comes to light but gives an idea of what is in scope and what the Plan will achieve.
- i. The Value of Open Spaces
 - a. Why we have open spaces – History
 - b. Research into open space and play – value of, links to health, other open spaces that work well, case studies, etc
 - c. MBC open space policies – Green and Blue infrastructure, Green Spaces Strategy 2004, Local Plan, LBAP, Play Strategies, etc

 - i. Maidstone Open Spaces
 - a. Detail of MBC Spaces
 - b. Green Space Types and quantities (Amenity, Allotments, Sports, Natural/Semi Natural, Play)
 - c. Other Green Space Types – (Trees, River Park, Nature Reserves,)
 - d. Management Structure – Parks Team, Rangers, Grounds Maintenance

 - ii. Maidstone Play Spaces
 - a. Play Area Strategy for the future building on £1.8m investment in 2016 and 2017.

 - iii. Allotments

 - iv. River Medway and River Len

 - v. Friends and Volunteer Groups

 - vi. Open Spaces and play areas for the Future
 - a. New Green Spaces – design of future open spaces
 - b. Festivals and Events in our Parks and Open Spaces
 - c. How will people use green spaces in the future (health and well being)
 - d. Biodiversity/Conservation objectives.

 - vii. Sports Pitches

- viii. 10 year action plan
 - a. Actions for the various open space types (Amenity, Allotments, Sports, Natural/Semi Natural, Play, etc.)
 - b. Policies for various open space types as required

Current Issues

3.2 A number of the current issues have already been identified with our parks and open spaces and these will be considered and solutions sought during the course of this work. These are:

- a. Toilets – management, cleaning etc.
- b. Quality standards – how we measure these and the standard we are aiming for.
- c. Green space hierarchy – should resources be focused now or in the future.
- d. Car Parking – maintenance of, demand and provision.
- e. Dogs and waste management – control of dogs.
- f. Recycling provision
- g. Management Structure – Do we have the most effective management structure in place to manage our parks and open spaces in the most effective and efficient manner.
- h. First aid responsibilities – identify and agree.
- i. Income Generation /Commercialisation – in parks
- j. Sustainable Parks
- k. Funding sources
- l. Volunteering /Friends Groups – including support and resource allocation.
- m. Sponsorship – opportunities.
- n. Links to health and wellbeing.
- o. Cuts in resources – internal and external.
- p. Events and Festivals in our parks – internal and external
- q. Education/Interpretation – what we provide and funding
- r. Green space managed by other parties (parishes, other organisations)
- s. Who doesn't visit our open spaces and why not.
- t. Disposal of surplus open space
- u. Antisocial Behaviour in open spaces – can this be better managed
- v. MBC adoption of S106 onsite Developer contributions
- w. Local Nature Reserves – ambitions, how these are managed and by whom

3.3 Initial research has shown that there are a number of sources that will be invaluable to this work; these include The Parks Alliance, International Federation of Parks and Recreation Administration (IFPRA), NESTA and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). There is also a considerable amount of information and guidance in work carried out by other local authorities and

other organisations so this will also be reviewed.

- 3.4 It is intended to look at how operators in the private and other sectors manage operations which are similar to those that we offer. Examples of these locally would be Bewl Water, Bedgebury Pinetum, the National Trust and any other similar facilities
 - 3.5 Once the initial research has taken place, consultation will be carried out with Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee, Maidstone residents and organisations such as the various friends of parks groups, allotment users, sports clubs and conservation groups to understand how they use our parks and open spaces get their views on how they think they should be managed in the future.
 - 3.6 It is important that groups that are perhaps not currently directly involved in our parks and open spaces, but could be in the future are consulted. Examples of these could be age concern, the NHS trust, local youth and disability groups.
 - 3.7 This work will take place over a six month period and it is envisaged that the final Parks and Open Spaces 10 Year Plan will be agreed and adopted in the later part of the year
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4. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 4.1 Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee could decide that they do not want a new Parks and Open Spaces 10 Year Plan to be produced.
 - 4.2 This is not recommended as to not have this document will result in uncertainty for the future of these important assets.
 - 4.3 The committee are asked to identify any other areas that they would like to see included in the plan.
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5. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee agree to the following:

- 5.1 That work continues on the Maidstone Parks and Open Spaces 10 year plan as detailed in this report.
 - 5.2 That when a draft document is produced, committee members are invited to give their opinions and thoughts on the document.
 - 5.3 That following consultation the committee will look to adopt the final Maidstone Parks and Open Spaces 10 Year Plan in the later part of 2016
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6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

6.1 Consultation will be carried out as detailed in the body of this report

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

7.1 Work will continue on the production of the Parks and Open Spaces 10 Year Plan and it will be brought back to the Committee for final decision later on in 2016

8. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Until a draft document is produced it will not be possible to identify any issues or implications. These will be highlighted in a later report when a draft of the Parks and Open Spaces 10 Year Plan has been produced.	Parks and Leisure Manager
Risk Management	The only current risk is that the work will not be able to be completed. This is a minimal risk as the resource has already been allocated to the production of the plan.	Parks and Leisure Manager
Financial	There are no long term financial implications at this time.	Parks and Leisure Manager
Staffing	Staff resource has been allocated to allow this work to take place.	Parks and Leisure Manager
Legal	There are no Legal implications at this time.	Parks and Leisure Manager
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	This will be carried out once a draft document has been produced.	Parks and Leisure Manager
Community Safety	No implications at this time.	Parks and Leisure Manager
Human Rights Act	No implications at this time.	Parks and Leisure

		Manager
Procurement	No implications at this time.	Parks and Leisure Manager
Asset Management	There are no implications at this time but production and adoption of the report should enable MBC to better manage its assets in future.	Parks and Leisure Manager
Impact on Corporate Priorities	Until a draft document is produced it will not be possible to identify any issues or implications. These will be highlighted in a later report when a draft of the Parks and Open Spaces 10 Year Plan has been produced.	Parks and Leisure Manager

9. REPORT APPENDICES

There are no appendices enclosed with this report

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None