

Progress Report : Parks and Opens Spaces 10 year Strategic Plan

Final Decision-Maker	Heritage, Leisure and Culture Committee
Lead Head of Service	Jennifer Shepherd, Head of Environment & Public Realm
Lead Officer and Report Author	Andrew Williams, Parks and Open Spaces Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

Heritage, Culture & Leisure Committee is asked to review the progress made in the delivery of the Parks and Open Spaces 10 Year Plan. The Committee is also asked to consider the comments and forward plan items.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the first annual summary of progress for Parks and Open Spaces 10 Year Strategic Plan is noted.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Heritage , Leisure & Culture Committee	29 th January 2019

Progress Report : Parks and Opens Spaces 10 year Strategic Plan

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 The Parks and Open Spaces 10 Year Plan was agreed at HCL in July 2017 (Appendix 1). The adoption of the plan concluded over 12 months research and consultation into the future direction of the service and how our Parks and Open Spaces should be managed and protected for the future.

1.2 The 10 year plan included position statements on biodiversity, nature reserves, S106 contributions and adoption of open space. It also highlights the key links to Maidstone's Strategic Plan and supporting strategies, as well as highlighting the challenges ahead.

1.3 The Plan sets out 3 priority areas:

- Open Spaces supporting Vibrant and Healthy Communities
- Open Spaces Fit for the Future
- Quality Spaces – Quality Service

From this six principles have been identified and four action areas.

1.4 The Parks and Opens Spaces team leading on the delivery of this strategy is comprised of experienced staff in the following roles;

- Parks and Open Spaces Manager
- Mote Park Officer
- Parks Projects Officer - (S106 schemes – 2 yr fixed term)
- Parks Officer
- Community Partnership Officer (Go Green Go Wild – 2 yr fixed term)

1.5 The team works on a wide variety of project based work, commissioning and procuring parks improvements, risk management and operational management issues. Customer service requests average 1200 per year.

1.6 Grounds Maintenance functions across the borough are delivered in-house by a team comprising:

- Grounds Maintenance Manager
- Supervisors x3
- Grounds staff x 39 (includes 3 apprentices)

Progress to date

1.7 The 10 year Plan is presented in four themes shown below, though there is significant cross working and impact felt across a number of these themes, for example Action areas 2, 3 and 4 all work to provide Action 1 'An Open Spaces Estate which best serves Maidstone's needs'.

1.8 The tables below set out the actions within each Action Area and the projects and progress made.

Action Area 1 : An Open Spaces Estate which best serves Maidstone's needs	
i) Identify Maidstone's needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play Area Policy reviewed, strategic and non-strategic play areas and provision within 12mins of homes.
ii) Assess Current Provision against Identified Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks audit system to be developed 2020 (Quality Value Matrix) • Play area policy has been reviewed and started to implement changes to MBC's provision.
iii) Identify and formulate Site Management and Improvement Plans for Key Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodbridge Drive – creation a natural play area & removal of very old multi-play unit and redundant fencing. • Bridge Mill Way – improved access, sports wall and surfacing & greatly improved safety surfacing. • Renewal of fencing at Albert Reed Gardens around play area and stream • Mangravet Recreation Ground – extended play area with new fencing and junior agility play. • Green Flag management plans at Whatman Park, Clare Park & Mote Park.
iv) Implement Site Management and Investment Plans for key Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of pro-active tree safety inspection programme; currently every 4 years to move to 3 yearly cycle. Providing a risk management approach to retain safe tree stock across the borough's estate. • Veteran & ancient tree survey Mote Park • Mallards Way – new boundary fencing(300m+), handrails and gates • Buckland Hill – pocket local nature reserve – glade creation , access work, fencing • Capital Investment Project in MBC Play areas concluded

	<p>Feb 2018 – 30+ play areas benefitted from £1.1 million scheme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control of Invasive species – Japanese Knotweed & Giant Hogweed • South Park – landscaping works to remove damaged conifer hedge and old chain-link fence and replant with native beech hedging and install rigid panel fencing • Working with Friends of South Park to realise aspirations for improved paths, restore fountain and increase tree planting.
<p>v) Assess and Implement Alternative Management Options for Non-key Sites</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategically Important Play Areas maintained by Parishes – Grant scheme launched Summer 2018. £87K awarded from total of £200k, second round of funding to be launched • Disposal of Franklin Drive non-strategic play area to Boxley Parish agreed and nearing formal transfer. • Further sites to be considered during 2019 : Fairhurst Drive & Whitebeam Drive

Action Area 2 : Providing Open Spaces for a Changing Population

<p>i) Understanding Supply and Demands - now & future</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future work to understand the borough growth identified in Local Plan • Investigate open space deficiencies (5 typologies – Amenity, natural, allotments, play & sport)
<p>ii) Ensure that the new supply delivers Principles & Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All new developments are assessed for quality opens spaces and how they serve the local community.
<p>iii) Develop robust protocols and management agreements to ensure long term quality is assured on new Open Space Sites</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During 2018 over 18 developer schemes with play & open space provision have been advised through pre-application and planning process. During 2018 all new housing developments over 10 units have been assessed for open space deficit, detailed calculations made and S106 contributions for offsite provision requested where appropriate. • During 2019 this will be delivered through the Community Infrastructure Levy

<p>iv) Ensure Development contributes to open spaces which meet Maidstone's needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buckland Hill – pocket local nature reserve – glade creation , access work & fencing • Complete renewal of Somerset Road play area – tender complete contract to commence Feb 2019 (Value £70k) • Bridge Mill Way Play Area - £55k capital investment from S106 – renewed play bark, created access path, installed new multi-play goal/hoop and improving path down to towpath
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Action Area 3 : Connected Delivery - Multiple Benefits	
<p>i) Plan Strategically for Multiple Benefits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess best format and terms of reference for Corporate Green & Blue Infrastructure forum in 2020 – engagement across Council required with participation from external organisations
<p>ii) Embed Cross-Sector Working</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop stakeholder Group during 2019-20
<p>iii) Build Capacity and Community Support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go Green Go Wild project – initiated with project officer to progress biodiversity agenda, community involvement. Building capacity and increasing engagement.
<p>iv) Develop a 'Quality of Life Programme'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop working relationship with Public Health – recognise parks and open spaces as a public health asset. • Health Lifestyle initiatives – to be developed including 'No Smoking in Play areas' .
<p>v) Develop a Biodiversity Enhancement Programme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity Strategy underway – working in partnership with stakeholders, residents with Medway Valley Countryside Partnership • Go Green Go Wild project – initiated to progress biodiversity agenda , community involvement. Building capacity and increasing engagement. • Go Green Go Wild Project officer role created and officer in post (2 yr fixed term) to lead on Biodiversity and Community Engagement initiatives.

Action Area 4 : Working Smarter

<p>i) Take a Whole-council Approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mote Park Dam – legal obligations to manage risk ‘as low as reasonably practicable’. Project underway to create an engineered spillway to ensure dam withstands a 1 in 1000 year flood event
<p>ii) Assess Income generation potential of all sites</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mote Park Project Board – moving towards completion of adventure zone Spring 2019 • Review of parks with potential to hold events – auditing access, capacity & constraints to provide Events Officer with reliable information to better advise potential clients and try new venues
<p>iii) Review Service Delivery and Implement Improvements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of Parks Officer & creation and recruitment of S106 Parks Project Officer • Resilience planning for service post-brexit; anticipation maintenance needs for play areas from specialist suppliers in EU. Maintenance needs for fleet and grounds maintenance equipment manufactured predominantly in Germany. • EU nursery stock supply chain issue for seeds, plants and bulbs.
<p>iv) Review & improve</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Parks and Open Spaces Key Performance indicators during 2019-20
<p>v) Forward Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Work-plan to be agreed with Management team & HCL
<p>vi) Implement an External Funding Programme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No action to date
<p>vii) Communicate Effectively</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular contributions to ‘365 Good News Stories’ • Annual ‘Tweet-athon’ • Parks Newsletter circulation approx. 1000 • Responsive to press and media enquiries

Forward Planning

Parks and Open Spaces Stakeholder group	2019
Quality Value Matrix to be developed	2020-22
Develop Parks and Open Spaces KPI's during 2019	2019-20
Mapping exercise to be undertaken by GIS (Geographical Information Systems) team to plot Access to Nature deficit – considering ANGSt (Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards)	2019
Local Nature Reserve - review	2019
Biodiversity /Community Engagement (Go Green Go Wild)	2019-2020

2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

2.1 This report is presented for information only.

3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 None

4. RISK

4.1 This report is presented for information only, committees, managers and heads of service can use the information to identify service performance, progress and understand risk.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

5.1 This report is presented to inform Members on progress made during 2018 on Maidstone's Parks and Open Spaces 10 year Strategic Plan 2017-2027 that was adopted by HCL Committee on 4th July 2017.

6 NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

6.1 None

7 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	As outlined in the Plan, this work contributes to a number of the priorities within the Strategic Plan, both directly and indirectly.	Head of Environment & Public Realm
Risk Management	Already covered in the risk section	Head of Environment & Public Realm
Financial	The projects described in this report are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	[Section 151 Officer & Finance Team]
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Environment & Public Realm
Legal	There are no specific legal implications at present as this report is presented for information only.	Team Leader (Corporate Governance) MKLS
Privacy and Data Protection	Not applicable There are no specific privacy or data protection issues to address.	Team Leader (Corporate Governance) MKLS
Equalities	This report is for noting and does not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	[Policy & Information Manager]
Crime and Disorder	Not applicable	[Head of Service or Manager]
Procurement	Not applicable.	[Head of Service & Section 151 Officer]

8 REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

Appendix 1 – Maidstone’s Parks and Open Spaces 10 year Strategic Plan 2017-2027

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None