

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	22nd September, 2010
Title:	Rotherham Green Space Strategy – Final Version
Programme Area:	Environment and Development Services

5. Summary

Following consultation on the draft Green Space Strategy document, a final version has been prepared and is submitted for approval and adoption. The Strategy sets out recommended standards for Green Space provision and related activities, and how these might be achieved.

6. Recommendations

- **That Green Space Strategy be recommended to Council for approval.**
- **That, subject to adoption of the Strategy, Officers be instructed to develop and pursue an action plan for its implementation, initially covering the period 2010 – 2015.**

7. Proposals and Details

The consultation draft of the Green Spaces Strategy was approved by Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Development Services on 16th February 2009. A programme of consultation then started in June 2009, and continued to March 2010. On 15th June 2010 a further report was taken to Cabinet Member for Cultural Services and Sport detailing the outcome of consultation and proposed responses. These included minor revisions to the Strategy text for clarification, and a very small number of changes to the scope and content of the Strategy. Cabinet Member approved these changes and agreed that responses be fed back to consultees.

A summary of the Strategy is attached as Appendix 1, and a full version has also been made available in the Members Room. The Strategy is based upon the following vision for Rotherham:-

“a place where people’s lives are improved by having access to a network of safe, well-used Green Spaces offering a wide range of recreational and learning opportunities in high quality, sustainable environments”.

Four strategic aims are proposed, as follows:-

- To increase the proportion of the people living within easy walking distance of Green Spaces meeting defined quality standards
- To increase the number of people who regularly visit Green Spaces
- To increase the proportion of the population who are satisfied with Green Space provision in Rotherham
- To increase the number of people participating as volunteers within Green Spaces.

The strategy also embraces the principles of sustainable development, fairness and community involvement. These aims and principles led to eight specific objectives:-

- 1 Provide sufficient accessible Green Space to meet current and future demand efficiently and sustainably
- 2 Make Rotherham a safer, healthier and more attractive place to live and visit by ensuring Green Spaces are secure, clean and well designed, managed and maintained
- 3 Target existing resources and secure new funding to improve priority Green Spaces and to manage and maintain them to high standards
- 4 Bring together different providers of Green Spaces and other partners to work towards agreed standards and priorities for Green Space provision
- 5 Actively involve communities in the development and management of Green Spaces to ensure that local needs are respected and valued
- 6 Raise people’s awareness of Green Spaces by making sites and activities within them accessible and attractive to all groups and individuals, thereby increasing use and satisfaction and contributing to community cohesion
- 7 Improve the environmental sustainability of Rotherham through biodiversity, landscape protection, reducing surface water runoff and other measures
- 8 Exploit opportunities to link Green Spaces to develop a green network across the borough

The Strategy Report contains 33 recommendations. Amongst the most important of these are the following:-

- Introduce accessibility standards in new planning policy aimed at ensuring that all new homes are within 280 metres of a Local Green Space and 840 metres of a Borough or Neighbourhood Green Space

- Consider change of use at low value sites in areas with plentiful supply of Green Spaces; work has already started on developing a method for this
- Introduce quality standards for design, maintenance and management of sites
- Establish a prioritised programme of site improvement
- Review and simplify the ownership of Council Green Spaces by different departments
- Explore the creation of properly resourced Community Trusts or similar bodies as an alternative way of managing and maintaining Green Spaces
- Ensure all capital investment is matched by appropriate revenue budgets
- Introduce planning policy or guidance to help achieve proposed standards of Green Space provision, for example through Section 106 agreements
- Establish a Panel representing principal providers of Green Spaces to co-ordinate and monitor implementation of Green Space Strategy
- Create new opportunities for volunteering in Green Spaces
- Protect and enhance existing green links and create new links between existing Green Spaces

8. Finance

This report has no immediate financial implications. However, longer term costs relate to delivering and sustaining improvements in Green Space provision. The Strategy is based on the principle of achieving improvement by maximising inward investment, and using available Council funding in an efficient and targeted way.

It is proposed that the Council works in partnership to access all available external funding and developer contributions, but it is also expected that bids to the Council's Capital Programme will also be a feature of efforts to secure funding to support the strategic development of Green Space sites. The implementation of the Strategy could also generate income to the Capital Programme through the sale of sites of limited strategic value.

Reprioritisation of maintenance programmes and savings from the cessation or reduction of service at some sites, based on informed decisions relating to the strategic value of sites, will be necessary to support the increased costs that will result from providing and sustaining higher standards of provision and priority sites.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Without significant capital and revenue investment it is unlikely that the proposed standards can be achieved. Delivery of strategic improvements will be heavily dependant on the development of effective partnerships and the availability of external funding opportunities and developer contributions. Whilst every effort will be made to ensure success in these areas, it is not possible to predict at this stage the availability of either. Future local demand for Green Space provision and the impact of development activities are difficult to predict in the long term and as such the strategy will need to review Green Space audit data periodically in order to take account of changing circumstances.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The Green Spaces Strategy will have extensive policy and performance implications.

- Rotherham Achieving: It contributes to regeneration by supporting inward investment bids, improving and promoting Rotherham's image, and by helping to create neighbourhoods of quality, choice and aspiration.
- Rotherham Alive: It aims to increase active use thereby contributing to improved health
- Rotherham Proud: It aims to increase community involvement and volunteering in Green Space development and management
- Fairness: It seeks to reduce inequalities by setting borough-wide standards for Green Spaces provision.
- Sustainable Development: It recognises the importance of Green Spaces for biodiversity and mitigation of the effects of climate change.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Appendix 1 - Rotherham Green Space Strategy Summary

Other papers:

- Rotherham Green Spaces Strategy – Final Version (copy in Members Room)
- Report to Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Development Services, 16th February 2009
- Report to Cabinet Member for Cultural Services and Sport, 15th June 2010

Extensive consultation has taken place with internal and external stakeholders, as detailed in the report to Cabinet Member for Cultural Services and Sport (15th June 2010) . Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

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